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Chairperson: Ms. Seanedzu (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Ghana)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.5)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.5: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Ms. Akbar** (Antigua and Barbuda), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.5 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the nexus between economic and social development must continue to be strengthened in accordance with the three pillars of the World Summit for Social Development referred to in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. The text, based on the provisions of General Assembly resolution 62/131, on recent deliberations of the Commission for Social Development and on recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/63/133), stressed the need to adopt social protection measures for marginalized socio-economic sectors and groups, to address the challenges of youth employment and to mainstream the concerns of persons with disabilities in development policies and programmes. She welcomed the proclamation of a Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and drew attention to the global financial, energy and food crises, stressing that the development of all countries depended on fair international trading practices and sound financial systems. She hoped that the draft resolution, which was still the object of informal consultations, would be adopted without a vote as in the past.

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.6: Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers

2. **Mr. Poli** (Brazil), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.6 on behalf also of Japan, provided a brief background of volunteering within the Organization, notably within the Committee, which had always adopted relevant draft resolutions by consensus. Building on the provisions of General Assembly resolution 60/134 and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/184), the draft resolution represented one step further to promote and recognize the importance of traditional and new initiatives on the part of all volunteering actors, including United Nations Volunteers. Convinced of the relevance of voluntary work to social development, his delegation wished to invite all Member States to support the draft resolution.

3. Paraguay, Poland and Slovakia had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.4)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.4: Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

4. **Ms. Akbar** (Antigua and Barbuda) introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.5 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which had been joined by Japan, said that the draft resolution was intended to continue the engagement of the General Assembly on the issue of ageing and older persons. The draft text built on the language of General Assembly resolution 62/130, on the conclusion of the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and on the proposals of the Secretary-General contained in his report (A/63/95). It placed emphasis on building capacity and the inclusion of ageing-specific and ageing-mainstreaming efforts by Member States and the United Nations system in general; Member States were encouraged to present their views on the outline of the strategic implementation framework for future implementation of the Madrid Plan. The Secretary-General was also requested to translate the Guide to the National Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing into the official languages of the Organization and the Member States were also encouraged to translate the Guide into their respective languages. She hoped that the draft resolution which was the subject of ongoing informal consultations would be adopted by consensus as had become the custom.

(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.7)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.7: United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

5. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.7 on behalf of its initial sponsors which had been joined by Argentina, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Finland, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Monaco, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Senegal and Singapore, acknowledged that during the first half of the United Nations Literacy Decade, considerable efforts had been made at the national, regional and international levels to meet the commitments in that regard. However, hundreds of millions of adults and children throughout the world were still unable to exercise their fundamental right to literacy and to instruction, conditions that were necessary for socio-economic development. Greater emphasis should therefore be placed, at the planning and budgeting stage, on instruction, strengthening the role of national and subnational organizations and enhancing the collaboration among stakeholders.

6. There was a need for reliable information on literacy, for broadening the decision-making process in that area and for the development of new strategies. Among other things, it was important to improve the quality of the content and implementation of literacy programmes, by carrying out research, sharing good practices and building capacity. Inadequate funding at the national and international levels was also a problem although the bodies of the United Nations system, chief among them being the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were collaborating with Governments to address the needs of countries with high illiteracy rates, particularly among women. UNESCO should also reinforce its role in fighting illiteracy and develop a renewed framework of cooperation and action with other international partners.

7. The creation of partnerships between Governments, international organizations, civil society, communities, the private sector and universities would be conducive to the attainment of the three priority objectives set by the regional conferences in support of literacy organized throughout the world, namely mobilizing stronger commitment to literacy, reinforcing more effective literacy programme delivery and harnessing new resources for literacy. Those priorities were part of the more general framework of the development objectives set at the international level and addressing them during the next five years would be a determining factor in the attainment of the objectives of the Decade.

8. Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the draft resolution had been amended: in paragraph 10, the words "and requests the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to develop a strategic framework for renewed cooperation and action based on these priorities, in cooperation with international partners in literacy, including the other specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system" had been deleted; at the end of paragraph 11, the phrase "based on the above priority areas" had been added. She hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.

9. The Bahamas, Bhutan, Cape Verde, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Haiti, Mozambique and Uganda had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.3)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.3: Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities

10. **Mr. Hermoso** (Philippines), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.3, said that according to figures provided by the Secretariat, 10 per cent of the world's population were disabled and 80 per cent of them were living in developing countries. The United Nations and the international community were striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, but disabled persons tended to be left out of the picture. Their role in cooperation activities for development must be increased, and the capacity of decision makers, execution agencies, members of civil society and disabled people themselves must be strengthened.

11. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which gave a better idea of the situation of those persons, emphasized their importance in development, the aim being to enable them to play a full role in that respect, with the same opportunities as the non-disabled. The draft resolution called for the

problems of disabled persons to be systematically taken into account in the development process. Governments and other interested parties, in seeking to achieve the MDGs and the internationally agreed development goals, were urged also to pay heed to the situation of disabled persons. He hoped that delegations would adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

12. Benin, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Mongolia, Mozambique, Panama, Paraguay, Senegal and Sri Lanka had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 97: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.9, A/C.3/63/L.11)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.9: Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons

13. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.9 on behalf of the sponsors, said that trafficking in persons and slavery, which chiefly affected developing countries, gravely violated the fundamental rights of millions of people, the majority of whom were women and children. Given the global scale of those evils, the international community must tackle them in a more coordinated and global fashion. The draft resolution, which reflected progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 61/180 and the relevant resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and its Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, proposed fresh measures with a view to better coordination of efforts to combat human trafficking, including negotiations on a global plan of action. He urged delegations to support the draft resolution, so bearing witness to the unity of the international community in facing up to the problem of human trafficking.

14. **The Chairperson** announced that Cape Verde and Nicaragua had become co-sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.11: United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

15. **Ms. Awino-Kafeero** (Uganda), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.11 on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the draft resolution followed upon General Assembly resolution 62/174, and was based on the Secretary-General's report on the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (A/63/87). It was hardly necessary to remind the Committee of the need to support the work of the Institute in combating crime.

16. Paragraphs 5 and 7 of the draft resolution had now been amended to read: "*Notes* the efforts of the Institute to establish contacts with organizations in those countries which are promoting crime prevention programmes and its maintenance of close links with regional and subregional political entities" and "*Draws directly from* the report of the Secretary-General, welcoming the decision of the Governing Board of the Institute to convene a conference of African ministers to discuss measures for improving the flow of resources to the Institute;". She hoped the draft resolution, on which informal consultations were currently being held, would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 56: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/63/38, A/63/222 and A/63/215)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/63/214, A/63/216, A/63/364 and A/63/205)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/63/217)

17. **Ms. Banks** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, said that those countries remained strongly committed to the advancement of women. Beyond civil and political rights and "naming and shaming", such advancement now involved greater focus than ever before on economic, social and cultural rights. A great human rights tragedy was the high rate of maternal mortality and disability, which accounted for 500,000 deaths and 20 times that number who were left disabled. Of all the MDGs, the least progress had been made in that relating to maternal mortality.

18. As for the countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, the need to improve the health of women and their communities was addressed in the Pacific Plan for Regional Cooperation and Integration. Emergency obstetric care, skilled birth attendance and family planning were central to combating maternal mortality and disability in her region, as elsewhere.

19. Indeed, the region had a number of challenges to overcome. Access to accurate data was a foremost

requirement; the registration of births and deaths, for instance, was not commonplace. Also essential was the mobilization of resources and support through catalysing international action and according higher priority to maternal health in national health budgets. Other important issues in the Pacific were the availability and quality of health services, particularly in remote areas. Similarly important was the need to improve access to quality family planning and increase the use of contraceptives. In that regard, support was provided by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, inter alia. The development of better indicators for establishing and monitoring progress was another vital matter.

20. The Pacific Islands Forum supported international efforts aimed at increasing focus on maternal health and called on United Nations agencies and other development partners to devote more attention to the subject. It welcomed the draft resolution sponsored by Senegal on supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/C.3/63/L.15/Rev.1) and the recent efforts of the Human Rights Council to promote maternal health, a subject to which it hoped that further attention would be devoted in 2009 by the Commission on the Status of Women.

21. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that, although some progress had been achieved in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, due in large part to the activities of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, much remained to be done in order to translate words into action.

22. Sixty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, women and girls were still victims of violence, whether domestic or sexual violence or trafficking in human beings. He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on that subject (A/63/214), which contained recommendations emphasizing the need for concerted and intensified efforts to eliminate violence against women.

23. Iceland fully supported Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, in which context it sought to promote the rights of women and girls and to mainstream gender equality into its foreign policy, as well as into United Nations activities. It attached particular importance to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and welcomed the agreed conclusions on financing gender equality and the empowerment of women adopted at its fifty-second session. It had also increased its core contributions to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which was a key partner in its development cooperation, and supported the Fund's activities in the Caribbean, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Africa.

24. Given the central role of the United Nations in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, his delegation strongly supported the establishment of a new United Nations entity with responsibility for those issues that would combine the normative and analytical functions of the existing architecture with a technical, policy-setting and programming role. He expressed the hope that the progress already accomplished would lead to an informed decision at the current session of the General Assembly.

25. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that the establishment of a federal democratic republic in Nepal had created new opportunities for the advancement of women and produced progress in that regard. Women represented one third of members of the Constituent Assembly, which was responsible for drafting a new constitution that would bring a logical conclusion to the country's nationally owned peace process. Nepal had adopted various measures, notably in the legislative and administrative fields, and instituted programmes and policies aimed at ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women. Those measures were specifically intended to achieve the objectives of equal property and citizenship rights; representation of women on at least one third of elected bodies; proportional representation of women in all organs of the State, including its bureaucracy; and due regard for the advancement of women when adopting budgets and implementing Government programmes. A special unit had also been established in the Nepal Police to curb violence against women and a law enacted to combat trafficking in women and children.

26. Nepal was a party to most of the international human rights instruments dealing with women's rights, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and it regularly submitted its periodic reports on the implementation of those instruments. The United Nations should increase its technical assistance to

Member States, in particular the least developed countries, for such implementation. International commitments should also be fully and effectively implemented, especially in connection with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, the advancement of women should have the benefit of adequate financing, a matter to which high priority should be given at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha at the end of the current year. The United Nations had an important role to play in the advancement of women and gender equality. His delegation therefore supported the proposals aimed at strengthening the Organization's gender architecture at the regional and national levels, with a view to promoting concerted and coordinated efforts on the part of all stakeholders.

27. **Ms. Al-Serri** (Yemen) said that, in her country, the obstacles to gender equality were social and not institutional insofar as equal rights for all were enshrined in its legislation and Constitution. In its efforts to ensure that all women enjoyed their rights, her Government had established a Supreme Council for Women, which was chaired by the Prime Minister and comprised all competent ministries and bodies. A strategy for the advancement of women had also been adopted for the period 2003-2005, taking into account the MDGs. In 2003, Yemen's legislation had been reviewed by a team of experts to ensure that it contained no discriminatory provisions and promoted the advancement of women. As a result of that review, the laws on labour, citizenship, public service, pensions and social security had been amended and quotas for the representation of women had been written into the Electoral Act and the laws on political parties and associations. The President of the Republic has also approved a proposal for the allocation of 15 per cent of parliamentary seats to women.

28. In the interests of realizing the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015, Yemen was pursuing its efforts to reduce the gap between the school enrolment rate for boys and that for girls, which currently stood at 61.4 per cent. Furthermore, notwithstanding the constantly growing number of women employed in public service, the Government was committed to increasing the proportion of women in the health and education sectors by 8 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively.

29. Yemen had recently submitted its sixth report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and believed that follow-up of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was vital to the achievement of gender equality. She reiterated her Government's commitment to the international conventions, treaties and agreements relating to the advancement of women and stressed that the international community should eliminate all obstacles that prevented women worldwide from enjoying their rights, in particular Palestinian and Arab women throughout all occupied territories.

30. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that the establishment of conditions for the full exercise of women's rights had faced numerous social, economic and political obstacles, as well as legal and budgetary constraints, which the Indonesian Government had sought to overcome with the valuable support of the relevant United Nations funds and programmes, particularly UNIFEM. Pursuant to a Presidential instruction of 2000 and legislation adopted in 2003, all Government agencies and national and regional bodies were obliged to mainstream gender equality into their work and their budgets. In the area of education, strategic plans for the period 2004-2009 had been formulated in order to halve female illiteracy by 2009, which was earlier than the deadline set by the MDGs. Several measures had been adopted to increase school enrolment throughout Indonesia, while scholarships had been established in poor and remote areas and in areas with a large population of girls. In addition, school curriculums had been changed to counter gender-based stereotypes.

31. Programmes and policies had also been implemented to reduce rates of maternal and infant mortality and to combat other disorders that affected women, particularly obstetric fistula. Poverty and physical violence also posed a risk to women's health. Indonesia was adopting a policy of zero tolerance with regard to violence against women, including rape and domestic violence. The 2007 Act on human trafficking also protected the rights of female migrant workers. The creation of employment for women in need and the strengthening of their capacities were among the goals of the national poverty reduction strategy, adopted in 2005. Laws on micro-, small- and medium-sized

enterprises and on cooperatives were also being developed to support entrepreneurship projects for women. Since the active involvement of women was an essential part of that process, gender-biased laws needed to be revised. For that reason, the laws on general elections, political parties and the status of members of parliament had been amended to ensure that, after the general election in 2009, women would account for 30 per cent of those elected to parliament.

32. **Ms. Rodríguez de Ortiz** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), recalling that the Constitution of her country recognized gender equality and the value of domestic work, said that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was carrying out a policy to eliminate discrimination and violence against women, which, as the Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/63/214), were rooted in legal and cultural inequalities between men and women. The position of State Minister for Women had been established at the start of the year and 50 per cent of members of parliament were women, including the Speaker. From a legal standpoint, the Act on the right of women to a life free of violence had been adopted and courts had been established to prosecute the alleged perpetrators of violence against women. The Act on the social protection of housewives had been adopted in August 2008. That Act aimed to establish and to regulate comprehensive social protection for households, including female migrants. The issue of gender equality was also taken into account in the elaboration of the national budget and in national statistics.

33. Regarding measures to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation, her Government had developed a plan of action to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in human beings and to provide assistance to victims. It had also developed a national plan of action against sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, which laid out a series of goals to reach within five years in relevant areas, in line with international commitments in that field.

34. Her Government attached the highest importance to the commitments undertaken at the Fourth World Conference on Women and supported the international commitments to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It also welcomed the invaluable services provided by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to the cause of women in developing countries. While it was the responsibility of States to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, international cooperation was also essential. It was therefore necessary to reach the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance (ODA), to enhance the participation of developing countries in the decision-making process of international financial institutions and to significantly reduce the external debt burden, which undermined national efforts aimed at gender equality and the empowerment of women.

35. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine), noting that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union, welcomed the decision of the European Commission to implement projects in Ukraine on gender equality in the workplace and on women's rights, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Development Programme. She also welcomed the fact that the gender equality work of the Commission on the Status of Women had been recognized and said that Ukraine remained attached to the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Her Government had ratified and adopted nine international treaties on women's rights, which it had used to elaborate several important instruments, including the Act on equal rights and opportunities for women and men, the programme for gender equality in Ukrainian society for the period 2006-2010 and the programme on reproductive health for the period 2006-2015.

36. Concerned by the close relationships between human trafficking, drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism, Ukraine reaffirmed its strong support for the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and related activities. It urged all States to comply with their obligations in that area, including by strengthening their national legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing perpetrators.

37. **Ms. Medal Garrido** (Nicaragua) said that she looked forward to commemorating the International Rural Women's Day on 15 October and reaffirmed the determination of Nicaragua to take concrete measures in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The

Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua sought to uphold women's rights under the Constitution and through special laws, such as Act No. 648 on equal rights and opportunities. Gender equality policies were based on twelve strategic guidelines which were incorporated into the programmes, plans and areas of action of different Government ministries and agencies with the aim of fostering the active participation of women in public life and politics and promoting the right to sexual and reproductive health education.

38. In order to combat the feminization of poverty and to achieve the third MDG target, Nicaragua was seeking to help women through food production programmes for rural women and through programmes providing access to credit at fair interest rates. In the area of education, Nicaragua had established literacy, technical assistance and training programmes, including in remote rural areas, while the model programme for family and community health provided free health-care and home-care services in order to restore the right to health that women had lost as a result of privatization policies. Thanks to that new model for health-care access, the number of cases of maternal mortality had fallen by almost 50 per cent between the first half of 2007 and the first half of 2008. Furthermore, in the previous year more than 11,000 women had stayed at maternity centres established in rural areas. Initiatives for HIV/AIDS prevention among women and for the elimination of violence against women were also being carried out. The Government was also striving to reach the level of 50 per cent women working in the civil service. In that regard, she noted that women still accounted for only 38.4 per cent of staff in the professional and higher categories within the United Nations and encouraged the Organization to redouble its efforts to improve that situation.

39. Finally, she called on developed countries to honour their ODA commitments so that developing countries would have the necessary funds available to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It was important to establish international cooperation that respected national priorities and to ensure that there was a fair international trading system by eliminating agricultural subsidies in the most powerful countries. In view of the current food, financial and energy crises, instead of fuelling conflicts, developed countries should make a stronger commitment to use their resources to promote gender-sensitive development, peace and human rights policies.

40. **Mr. Kim** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government was implementing policies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to promote gender equality in keeping with the Juche idea, a people-centred philosophy, and women now exercised their rights in all domains on an equal footing with men. The Government had honoured its commitments as a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thereby contributing to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls.

41. Despite the efforts of the international community to protect and promote women's rights, many challenges remained. In that regard, crimes committed against women in the past must be resolved. Referring to the issue of the 200,000 "comfort women" exploited by the Japanese imperial army, he said that the Japanese authorities had always denied their responsibility for those crimes and refused to apologize or to make reparation to the victims. His delegation therefore urged the Government of Japan to settle the issue of the "comfort women" promptly.

42. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that violence against women was one of the most common human rights violations. Kazakhstan strongly advocated providing a secure national system of human rights protection, with a special focus on women and children. It also supported the Belarus initiative to strengthen the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

43. Owing to its geographical location, Kazakhstan was a transit hub for trafficking in women and girls. The Government was playing an active role in preventing human trafficking in close collaboration with government agencies of the Commonwealth of Independent States and other countries, as well as with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and other agencies. It had also reinforced its mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women within the framework of the gender equality strategy adopted by presidential decree. Her Government considered it crucial to enhance the substantive and programmatic aspects of the support that the United Nations system provided to

Member States in order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. Progress in the advancement of women also called for adequate financial resources; consequently, the Government welcomed the new trend towards gender budgeting. Women should be provided with decent employment and allowed to play an increasing role in national economic development in order to further their advancement. In Kazakhstan, two-thirds of all recipients of microcredit were women, and there were very many women in political positions or involved in business.

44. Her Government was consistently increasing social spending, primarily on health care, education, employment, and social protection for vulnerable groups. While her country might not be able to achieve the MDG target of reducing maternal mortality, it was taking all necessary measures to improve reproductive health and placed great hopes on the recommendations that would emerge from the upcoming major international conference organized to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata on primary health care.

45. Despite its achievements, her Government was well aware of the scope of the challenges ahead and intended to work in close collaboration with the United Nations system and other relevant parties to meet them. It commended the actions taken by the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in keeping with the MDGs, and welcomed the improvement in the Organization's gender architecture and gender mainstreaming within the United Nations.

46. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that, despite the Organization's firm commitment and the efforts of the specialized agencies and Member States, much still remained to be done with respect to the advancement of women. For any national development process to be successful, it must involve the active participation of women in the implementation of social, economic and political programmes. As soon as it achieved independence, Tunisia had recognized that a society that was a prisoner of outmoded practices would be unable to implement a satisfactory development process. Accordingly, on 13 August 1956, it had enacted a personal status code, which was a fundamental element of the new blueprint for society in newly independent Tunisia. The Code, which embodied the principle of gender equality before the law, had been consolidated by the social and political modernization of the country brought about by the reforms carried out since November 1987. In the dual context of political democratization and economic restructuring, the economic integration of women was considered essential. Access to employment had been one of the most effective measures to ensure the financial independence of women and exemplified gender equality in practice. Women were represented in different sectors: 10,000 women were heads of companies (out of a total population of 10 million inhabitants), and 40 per cent of university professors, 29 per cent of judges and 31 per cent of lawyers were women. Tunisian women were also active partners in decision-making. The public authorities also paid special attention to rural women, including by establishing programmes, plans and mechanisms to enhance their skills and enable them to contribute to boosting the family income.

47. While Tunisia currently had a plethora of assets to help consolidate its achievements, its most important asset was the constantly renewed political will to continue the task of integrating women into all sectors of national life.

48. **Ms. Abdullahi** (Nigeria) said that the establishment of democracy in Nigeria had given rise to a vibrant civil society that protected the rights of women and girls and helped combat all forms of discrimination. Both the Federal Government and state governments had put in place mechanisms intended to ensure the advancement of women and gender equality. Much progress had been made in formulating national policies and action plans to promote gender equality, reduce violence against women, improve the access of women to economic activities and of girls to education, and reduce the illiteracy of women and girls. The rates of child and maternal mortality and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases had also declined.

49. Women's civil society organizations were actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation of both national and international initiatives in the country, including the formulation and revision of domestic laws and regulations affecting women. Nigeria's commitment to the advancement of women and to gender equality had been demonstrated by the adoption of a national policy of gender parity and empowerment of women. To combat the horrendous crime of trafficking in women and children, the

Government had set up a national agency to address all issues relating to trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Since its establishment, that agency had heard complaints from 2,285 victims of trafficking and prosecuted 32 human traffickers. To address violence against women and girls, "temporary shelters" had been set up where female victims of domestic and sexual violence could receive free medical treatment. At the same time, rapists were subject to heavy prison terms of from 2 to 14 years.

50. On the political front, moreover, the number of women elected to the Legislature had steadily risen. Women were determined to overcome the challenges and make their contribution to Nigeria's democratic governance.

51. The campaign for the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS had reduced its prevalence from 4.9 per cent in 2006 to 3.7 per cent. Tremendous inroads had also been made in the area of education, particularly the education of girls, in spite of cultural and ethnic differences.

52. With a view to fostering community participation in improving access to education, 4,525 educationally disadvantaged communities in 10 states of the Federation had benefited from massive training programmes at the local level, under the self-help component of the second Primary Education Project funded by the World Bank. In order to improve the status of women in rural areas, the Government had built infrastructure, provided fertilizer subsidies, improved agricultural extension services, harnessed water resources and encouraged the development of small-scale agro-industries.

53. There had been real gains, but a number of challenges still had to be overcome. Maternal and child mortality continued to be one of the most serious development issues. To address the problem, the Government had allocated more funds to the health sector to ensure the establishment of adequate primary health-care facilities. It had increased health service personnel in both rural and urban areas and, lastly, had put in place monitoring structures at all levels, clearly defining their roles and responsibilities and the chain of command.

54. She underscored the importance of promoting gender-responsive budgeting, particularly in Africa, in order to mobilize the funding needed to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the outcomes of other international meetings and instruments.

55. **Mr. Emadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) observed that macroeconomic and political factors such as poverty, globalization, migration and conflict also had an impact on the status of women. Girls were at risk of violence in times of war and conflict, when societies broke down and the idea took hold that women and girls were possessions to be claimed or destroyed.

56. The complex nature of the problem called for a holistic, rights-based approach. Governments, the private sector, communities and families must be accountable for protecting the rights of women and girls. It was particularly important to involve men and boys in the process. Understanding how masculinity and femininity were defined by society was a step towards solving the problem of injustice and violence against women. International legal and policy frameworks must be adequately implemented at the local and grass roots levels to remedy the situation. Key international conventions had often not yet been incorporated into national legislation, or else the national laws were not being properly enforced.

57. Effective policymaking and programming required accurate data. For instance, the groups of women and children at high risk of injustice and violence had to be identified. Especially in European countries, most such groups were not properly counted, often because researchers were unaware of the problems women were facing. To obtain more gender-specific and context-specific information, indicators such as age, sex, family situation, ethnicity, geographical origin and the like should be considered. Protection and empowerment were two sides of the same coin. Since education was one of the most important investments for the empowerment of women and girls, curricula should be gender-sensitive and women and girls should be taught in a safe and productive learning environment.

58. More work and investment were needed in fields such as quality education for girls, nutrition for early growth and development, family planning, mentorship, legal advocacy and action against exploitative work and child labour. Programming should take into account the particular needs of girls.

59. Governments should draw up national strategies for the advancement of women and work closely with the ministries concerned to incorporate them into the

national development plans. It was high time that steps were taken to ensure social justice, a respect for the social status and dignity of women and their right to social security and decent jobs, and support for women who were heads of household. In that regard, it was also recommended that the parliaments of Member States should adopt the laws needed to improve the economic and social status of women. The Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran met virtually all of those requirements. The Charter was based upon divine values encompassing the socio-cultural and politico-economic areas in which women played a role.

60. In the contemporary world, it was necessary to specify the noble status of women and girls, to which the clichéd ideas of gender equality or gender equity did not do justice. Instead, the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed the innovative notion of gender justice, which took account of the special capacities and unique qualities of women as a counterpoint to men in the areas where men were inadequate.

61. **Mr. Tanin** (Afghanistan) said that he endorsed the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

62. The Taliban regime, basing itself on an erroneous interpretation of Islam, had been known for its acts of repression and also for its misogyny that had deprived Afghan women of their most basic rights, including their rights to freedom of movement, education, work and health care, for a number of years.

63. The fall of the Taliban regime had enabled Afghan women to regain their position in society on an equal footing with men. Promoting women's rights was central to the concerns of political leaders and was included in the fundamental instruments such as the Afghan Constitution, the Afghanistan Compact, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the report on the achievement of the MDGs in Afghanistan.

64. The Government's action had tackled political, economic and social issues and issues relating to fundamental rights. Afghan women were no longer excluded from the labour force and presently accounted for 28 per cent of members of parliament, almost 26 per cent of civil servants and 30 per cent of agricultural workers. Their access to health care had improved following the establishment of a package of basic health-care services including emergency obstetric care. With regard to education, 40 per cent of the 6 million children in schools were girls.

65. However, obstacles still remained. Afghan women's access to health care and education, including in rural areas, was hindered by problems such as distance, the lack of, or the poor state of roads and the shortage of teachers and health-care workers. In addition to those difficulties, there had been a resurgence in the extremist ideologies and activities of the Taliban, which was waging campaigns of terror and intimidation. The Government of Afghanistan believed that the upcoming elections would provide yet another opportunity for the Afghan people to reject violence, particularly violence against women. It hoped that the international community would provide support to enable Afghan women to sustain the gains that had been made over the past seven years.

66. **Mr. Kim** Young-chol (Republic of Korea) said that in its recent report (Who Answers to Women? Gender & Accountability), UNIFEM had highlighted the responsibility of the role of the State and of society in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. His delegation supported unreservedly the fundamental message of the report, that gender equality and the empowerment of women were the main conditions necessary to promote the universality of human rights, achieve the MDGs and guarantee international peace and security.

67. His Government therefore fully supported the establishment within the United Nations of a new body responsible for promoting gender equality. He hoped that body would ensure that the issue of gender equality was mainstreamed into all the Organization's programmes and that it would be provided with the necessary human and financial resources.

68. Every effort should be made to tackle the problems faced by certain categories of women, such as women migrants, refugee women and poor women. Violence against women was also a current problem which required a global response. He therefore welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to launch a global campaign to end violence against women, fully supported the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women and the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) on women and peace and security, which demanded the immediate and

complete cessation of sexual violence in areas of conflict. He also welcomed the progress that had been made by the UNIFEM campaign Say NO to Violence against Women and urged all Member States to join it.

69. Sexual violence in armed conflict, which his delegation had always strongly condemned in the debates of the Security Council and the General Assembly, was one of the most serious violations of human rights. States must therefore do all they could not only to protect women during armed conflicts but also to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice and to eliminate impunity.

70. The Government of the Republic of Korea, on the basis of the agreed conclusions on financing gender equality and the empowerment of women, adopted by the fifty-second Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, had taken steps to draw up, by 2010, a fiscal policy that integrated the gender perspective. As part of its efforts to promote gender equality, the Government had conducted a time-use survey with a view to achieving a greater balance between men and women with regard to family responsibilities.

71. The Republic of Korea was committed to cooperating with the United Nations to achieve gender equality throughout the world and had increased the volume of its financial contributions to UNIFEM and other bodies working to combat violence against women.

72. **Mr. Ould Hadrami** (Mauritania) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

73. In the context of its activities to promote development and combat poverty, Mauritania had undertaken reforms which had particularly benefited women. It had established a national secretariat for women's issues, responsible for promoting the participation of women in economic and social life, in accordance with Islamic values. His Government had also adopted a national strategy for the promotion of women for the period 2005-2008, aimed at improving women's standard of living and strengthening their role in the family and in society.

74. Mauritanian women had played an increasingly important role in society over the past two decades and in particular since the promulgation of the Electoral Code in 2006, which established a quota of 18 per cent for women on any lists of candidates for election. In the elections of 2006 and 2007, women had won 21 per cent of the seats in Parliament and 30 per cent of the seats in municipal councils.

75. Government policies also aimed to promote the education, effective integration and participation of women in decision-making in all areas. To that end, a number of priorities had been defined. With regard to education, efforts were being made to achieve a sustained increase in the enrolment rate of girls, which stood at 75 per cent in 2007. Other priorities included the financing of small projects, the promotion of savings and credit, job creation, the promotion of vocational training and the organization of vaccination campaigns for women and newborns.

76. As further proof of its political commitment, the Government of Mauritania had enacted a new Personal Status Code, aimed at ensuring better integration of women into society. It had also ratified several international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, Mauritania would only be able to achieve the goals that it had set itself with the cooperation of its development partners. Any obstacle to that cooperation would have harmful consequences for the situation of women, children and Mauritanian society as a whole.

77. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that for gender equality to be achieved, it was not enough to outlaw discriminatory practices; the root causes of gender imbalances needed to be addressed. The Constitution of Eritrea guaranteed gender equality and reserved 30 per cent of national parliamentary seats for women.

78. Aware that women were disproportionately affected by poverty, the Government of Eritrea had, in drawing up its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, given pride of place to the needs of women with regard to issues including the electrification of rural areas, access to drinking water, education, primary health care and rural microcredit. The Government savings and microcredit programme, operating in all six regions, was the largest in the country with 35,000 clients, of whom 40 per cent were women.

79. Her Government had placed its reproductive health programme, which was an integral part of primary health care, at the forefront of its national health policy. The services provided had been improved by strengthening the human and material

resources of health-care centres and through the free distribution of vitamins, iodine tablets and mosquito nets to women of childbearing age. The maternal mortality rate had fallen by more than half from 985 per 100,000 in 1993-1995 to 450 per 100,000 in 2005.

80. In order to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015, the national education policy placed emphasis on the enrolment rate of girls, which, though it had tripled between 1991/92 and 2005/06, remained much lower than that of boys. The high participation of women in literacy programmes was also very encouraging.

81. The Government of Eritrea had adopted a new law criminalizing female genital mutilation, a practice which was deeply entrenched, and had launched a major public awareness campaign. It had also hosted a subregional conference on the issue in Asmara, on 27 and 28 March 2008, to share best practices with other countries in the Horn of Africa.

82. **Ms. Castillon** (Bolivia) said that her country's development strategy was based on the concept of "well-being", which had its roots in indigenous cultures, and emphasized a people-centred approach as well as collective decision-making and respect for diversity in governance.

83. As part of that strategy, the Government had recently adopted a 2009-2013 five-year plan for gender equality, which covered five areas: prevention of gender-based violence; health; education; the economy, productive life and employment; and promotion of the full participation in political life.

84. The national development plan provided for the establishment of development councils comprising representatives from all sectors of society, including women's associations. Since August 2007, the goal of the Secretariat of State for Planning and Coordination had been to mainstream gender equality in all its activities, consistent with the trend towards decolonization and construction of a new State.

85. With regard to education, the Government had, during the first half of its term, from 2006 to 2007, launched a literacy programme, which had initially identified 823,256 illiterate people, 73 per cent of whom were now able to read and write. Nearly four-fifths of the remaining 27 per cent were women, and nearly all of them were from rural areas.

86. **Bolivia** attached great importance to the participation of women in public life. A striking example of the changes under way was the current Minister of Justice, an indigenous woman from a severely disadvantaged background.

87. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he objected to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, whose claim that Japan denied its past was simply false. He did not understand what that country's representative was implying.

88. Japan had held and planned to continue to hold talks with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with a view to addressing the regrettable events of the past and forging diplomatic relations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must take concrete measures to ensure progress in the normalization talks, the conditions for which were, as stipulated in the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, resolving the regrettable events of the past and developing an overall solution to outstanding issues of concern, including abductions and nuclear and missile issues.

89. Japan's basic policy had not changed: the country had expressed sincere remorse about the events of the Second World War and had apologized to the so-called "comfort women" on 4 August 1993. Japan had candidly confronted its past and had been devoting itself to peace and prosperity for the last 60 years, by adopting a purely defensive military strategy and advocating an exclusively peaceful resolution of international disputes.

90. The groundless accusations made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea could not distract from the current human rights violations committed in his country, mentioned in reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and General Assembly resolutions.

91. **Mr. Kim** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation had raised the issue of the use of "comfort women" by the Japanese imperial army because of Japan's duplicitous attitude. Indeed, whenever the question of the crimes against humanity committed by Japan 60 years ago was raised in international forums, the Japanese delegation always claimed that Japan had already made an apology, but another denial soon followed. The 1993 statement

referred to by the representative of Japan had been followed by statements on 4 March and 25 March 2007 of the then-Japanese Prime Minister and one of his vice-ministers, respectively, both of which refused to acknowledge Japan's responsibility for the "comfort women" issue.

92. In addition, Japanese history books had either removed any reference to or twisted the evidence of crimes committed during that period and war criminals were worshipped as heroes. A country that denied its past crimes was highly likely to commit others. Rather than hope that its past crimes would simply fade away or that they could be hidden, Japan would be well advised to emulate the example of other countries that had truly apologized.

93. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan) said that he had already explained his position and would not repeat it, except to say that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must take concrete measures to move the normalization talks forward. He hoped that such talks would be successful so that exchanges of the type just heard would no longer occur.

94. **Mr. Kim** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) recalled that by signing the Pyongyang Declaration in September 2002, the Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan had agreed to address the crimes committed against the Korean people during the Japanese occupation of Korea, and to resolve the question of the missing Japanese citizens. His Government, which had done everything in its power to resolve the question of the missing persons, would be very happy to see Japan truly address the question of the crimes against humanity committed in Korea, which Japan had not yet done, regardless of its claims.

The meeting rose at 6.07 p.m.